



## From the Superintendent Summer 2010

***Equipped, Inspired and Engaged:*** As part of Denver Christian Schools' strategic planning process, we have been trying to describe the student we would like to graduate from high school. As a result of countless meetings and hours of dialogue, those are the three words that seem to be rising to the surface. What do those three words mean to you? Have you ever been thrown into a situation in which you felt perfectly equipped? Can you think back to a teacher who inspired you to dig deeper and learn more? Have you recently been involved in a very engaging conversation?

One of our goals for this coming school year is to put more definition to the terms and also broaden their use far beyond a graduate's description. If students, for example, are to be inspired, what teacher behaviors and characteristics will accomplish that? And why should it be limited to teachers? How can a teacher be equipped and engaged without a principal who models that behavior? While we're at it, shouldn't all of our Board Trustees be equipped to do the work God has called them to do and deeply engaged with folks for the good of our schools?

The more I think and discuss what those words mean and what this organization can do and be if everyone is equipped, inspired and engaged to accomplish our mission, the more excited I get. It's going to be a great year as we explore what God has in mind for us.

**ReNew:** That is the name of our thrift store. Yes, we do have a thrift store. A generous group of businessmen purchased a store at 3473 S. Broadway in Englewood and are leasing it to Denver Christian. Another generous DC supporter has provided a \$75,000 interest-free loan to help us get started. We have hired **Mikaila Grafft** to be our store manager. We hope to open our doors for business in September, but before that happens we will need to do some construction work, set up displays, hang signage, secure and organize the volunteer staff, and much more. We finally see a glimpse of the fruit of our planning and praying. I am eager to send the message that it's time to empty those garages and basements and get rid of all the things you have patiently been saving. We're close. Many schools just like ours are operating stores that generate much needed non-tuition revenue. We believe the location of our store, our new manager, the board we are organizing and this tremendously supportive school community will be used by God to help Denver Christian be accessible to more Christian families.

**New Staff Members:** We have several new staff members coming on board this year. At our Van Dellen Campus, we have a new 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teacher coming to fill the half-time position left by Anne Buteyn. **Kimberly Naiman** graduated from Dordt College and has a year

of experience teaching at Worthington Christian School in Worthington, MN. She currently resides in Westminster, CO and is looking forward to joining the Van Dellen staff.

At Highlands Ranch we have a new 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher and a new 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teacher. Coming to teach 5<sup>th</sup> grade is **Ben Kloosterman**. Ben is a graduate of Calvin College and filled a long-term sub position in Kalamazoo Christian Elementary School last spring. And coming back to Denver Christian Schools to teach 2<sup>nd</sup> grade is **Kate Roberts**. Kate is one of our own inspired and equipped graduates who is eager to engage her 2<sup>nd</sup> graders. Kate graduated from Calvin College and taught one year at French Elementary School in Colorado Springs.

Not new to Denver Christian, but filling a new role this year is **Lynda Micikas**. Lynda has taught science at the Denver Christian High School and will continue to teach four classes this coming year. That slightly reduced teaching load allows her to help us as Assistant to the Superintendent in Academics. Lynda brings experience in curriculum work and is passionate about excellence and accomplishing our mission.

We still have one part-time choral music position to fill at Denver Christian High School as Kathy VanArsdale announced her retirement near the end of the school year.

**Enrollment:** Our enrollment is tracking better than it was a year ago. We predicted that it would and actually based our budget on 815 students. While we are pleased with the growth that we are seeing, we do need a spurt of transfers to come in before August in order to avoid implementing a contingency budget that reduces expenses. Our kindergarten enrollment on both campuses looks great. In fact, class sizes across the elementary grades give us reason to be very optimistic about the future. About five years ago a merger attempt that did not materialize caused a number of families to leave DC. That departure left us with a "dip" in enrollment across several grades. The lowest enrollment number is currently in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Our goal is to recruit transfers to fill some of those small 8<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> classes and continue to bring in healthy kindergarten classes, resulting in a gradual and steady increase in enrollment. Both of our K - 8 campuses should start the school year with over 300 students. If we can recruit enough students to keep our HS enrollment over 200, we will come close to our goal of 815. That has been my prayer this summer and I invite you to join me in asking God to bring those families to our door.

**Needs:** In the spring of 2009 many of our families were feeling the financial pressures that accompanied the nation's economic crisis. For some, Christian education was a luxury they felt they could no longer afford. I believe it was God's providence that brought a donor to our door who offered help in the form of a \$300,000 check. That gift, combined with a strong commitment to Christian education in our school community, resulted in enrollment levels that held amazingly consistent at a time when many private schools were experiencing significant decline. Many grateful couples left my office in tears, promising to be just like that donor when things turned around for them.

Well, it has not turned around for too many of them, yet. We continue to experience a high demand for tuition assistance. In each case, we require income verification and other

financial information from the family. We use formulas to determine the level of support available in each situation. When necessary, we invite the parents in for an interview to try to determine the level of sacrifice they are making and the monthly payment they can realistically afford. We don't keep them all, but we do manage to minimize the number of families who leave for financial reasons. So, one consistent need we continue to experience is the need for donations to make up the difference when families are not able to do it alone. There are few people capable of a \$300,000 gift, but many who share that same spirit of community. No gift is too small.

Trying to fill every desk and provide a Christ-centered education for every family that wants it has been a top priority. While that has been our focus during lean times, there are other needs that have been neglected. Here are some of the things we have on a contingency list for when money is available.

- Teachers and support staff have experienced no increases in salaries and wages while they remain at levels below the industry standard. At our current staffing level it takes approximately \$45,000 for each 1% increase.
- We've identified about \$115,000 of technology upgrades that are necessary to stay current. Interactive white boards, new computer stations, and updates in software - we try to upgrade workstations every four years and many are due.
- We use an outside service to keep our schools clean, but we are understaffed in the area of facility maintenance. \$50,000 would help free our administrators to focus on education.
- A list of facility needs that can't be postponed much longer totals about \$105,000 and includes everything from new floor mats, more comfortable folding chairs and parking lot maintenance to a new PA system and high school bleachers. If you're interested in a complete list, I'd be happy to provide it.

**Prayers:** God is faithful, and He's good. When I list the needs at Denver Christian Schools, I am listing the things *I think* we need. How often have we looked back on our lives and realized we had no idea what we really needed while God provided the exact right thing. So, what I pray for most often is that my will is lined up with God's will. God has given us so much. We have sound buildings in which to do our work. We have always been able to pay our employees. We have teachers and staff members who love God and want to serve Him. Most importantly, God has given us students. He will determine exactly how many students will walk in the door and how many dollars their parents will pay. While I will probably fret over those enrollment numbers and struggle with how to make expenses and revenue balance, please pray that we will take seriously our work with each child. Pray that each student will be equipped with the tools she needs to follow God's call for her life. Pray that each one will be inspired and excited to know and love God more and to serve him faithfully. Pray that each student will be determined to engage his world in a way that will help bring His transforming power and love to the darkest of places. As God has been faithful to us, pray that we will be faithful to Him.